

Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, February 10, 1803, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY J. MSS. (ALBERT GALLATIN.)

Feb. 10, 1803.

I inclose you Crowninshield's and Jibaut's letters recommending Stevens and Storer. Storer was also recommended by Mr. Lincoln. Illsley by Genl. Dearborn. The circumstance of exhibiting our recommendations even to our friends, requires great consideration. Recommendations, when honestly written should detail the bad as well as good qualities of the person recommended. That gentlemen may do freely, if they know their letter is to be confined to the president or the head of a department. But if communicated further it may bring on them troublesome quarrels. In Gl. Washington's time he resisted every effort to bring forth his recommendations. In Mr. Adams time I only know that the republicans knew nothing of them. I have always considered the controul of the Senate as meant to prevent any bias or favoritism in the President towards his own relations, his own religion, towards particular states &c. and perhaps to keep very obnoxious persons out of offices of the first grade. But in all subordinate cases I have ever thought that the selection made by the President ought to inspire a general confidence that it has been made on due inquiry and investigation of character, and that the Senate should interpose their negative only in those particular cases where something happens to be within their knowlege, against the character of the person and unfitting him for the appointment. To Mr. Tracy at any rate no exhibition or information of recommendations ought to be communicated. He may be told

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that the President does not think it regular to communicate the grounds or reasons of his decision. Friendly salutations and respect.

P. S. To exhibit recommendations would be to turn the Senate into a court of honor, or a court of slander, and to expose the character of every man nominated to an ordeal, without his own consent, subjecting the Senate to heats and waste of time, of which those who were present at the nomination of Colo. W. S. Smith, have seen an example. There a committee sat weeks in judgment upon scandal from every quarter.